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# THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

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## **Educational News and Editorial Comment**

### SELECTING A SUPERINTENDENT

The city of Philadelphia is engaged through its Board of Education in the difficult task of finding a superintendent of schools. A special committee is canvassing the possibilities and has adopted as one of its modes of procedure, correspondence with various educators as to the comparative merits of a number of possible candidates. As a basis for this correspondence the committee has drafted a statement of the qualifications which in the judgment of its members should be found in the man who is to be selected. The statement is as follows:

#### *PERSONAL:*

A dominating personality—a leader of men.

A man of good moral character and religious belief.

A good public speaker.

A man of strong constitution and good health, industrious, persevering, courageous, and with a high sense of personal honor; with a good sense of humor, clean in person and in mind; temperate in act and speech, knowing when to speak and when to keep silent; honest and square, tactful and diplomatic.

A man of forty to fifty years of age.

A man who is animated by ideals of service and who is kindly and sympathetic toward his assistants.

A man who, when the needs of the schools demand it, knows how to fight, and to fight hard.

*PROFESSIONAL:*

A graduate of a reputable college.

A graduate student of school administration or a professor of administration in one of the leading graduate schools of education.

An important contributor to publications of scientific societies or to educational periodicals upon contemporary problems of consequence to the administration of city schools.

A man who is recognized among superintendents of city schools as one of the ablest and most successful of their group.

*EXPERIENCE:*

A man who in his earlier years was a teacher and principal of an elementary school, who later became a superintendent in a small city which employed only the one executive officer, and who now holds, or has within the past two years held, the superintendency of a city school system in which there is one or more other departmental heads such as the business manager, superintendent of buildings, etc., and in which there is a wide variety of schools represented such as vocational schools, special classes for gifted and subnormal children, etc.

A man who is fully up-to-date in matters pertaining to supervision of instruction.

A man who has had uniformly conspicuous success in each of these classes of positions, and especially in those cities where conditions made success difficult to attain.

It is most encouraging to find a group of laymen laying stress, as is done in this statement, on professional qualifications of the highest type. There was a time when boards of education would have ignored the professional training of candidates or would at least have thought of it as a matter of very minor importance. Even now there are some patrons of schools and some school officers who hold to the older type of estimate of professional and scientific equipment. It is gratifying to those who think of the school superintendency as something more than a political job to come on evidence that there is a steady upward trend in the kind of demand that municipalities are making of school superintendents.

It is also very encouraging to note that boards of education are beginning systematically to canvass the whole country when an important school position is to be filled. Philadelphia is following the example of a number of the larger cities which in

recent years have given the fullest and most careful consideration to candidates from outside their own systems. Here again the narrow traditions of the past are not entirely overcome, but they are fast giving way to the progressive demands of modern civilization. To find the best man and the most competent man, wherever he is, and to select him for his professional equipment is coming to be expected whenever there is a school vacancy to be filled.

#### A NATIONAL SURVEY

The American City Bureau is an agency which helps chambers of commerce to extend their organizations and influence. This bureau goes into a city and secures members for the chamber of commerce and stimulates the members to take up the study of municipal problems and to undertake measures for the promotion of city welfare.

Professor Strayer has taken advantage of this agency and has secured its co-operation in a national survey of teachers, the purpose of which is to make it possible for any citizen to make comparisons between conditions as they exist in a given city and conditions throughout the country. A conference of superintendents was called in Cleveland last February, and an educational committee was organized within the City Bureau to collect school information. The inquiry was financed by the Commonwealth Fund and chambers of commerce have co-operated in reporting the facts which are now embodied in a report.

An advance statement by the City Bureau regarding a part of this report is given as follows in the *New York Evening Post*:

Chambers of commerce in 359 cities of the United States with a population of 8,000 or more will receive today from their national committee for co-operation with the public schools the results of a nation-wide survey relating to salaries, training, and experience of teachers in which it is declared that in point of salary the average school teacher is "worse off than before the war."

The report, the first of four "interpretive inquiries," will enable these cities, it is said, to learn for the first time the truth about their own schools and to compare them with the schools of other cities throughout the country.

This survey, which was undertaken by the American City Bureau after a conference of superintendents of schools with chamber of commerce secretaries at Cleveland, O., last February 24, has been in progress more than six months. The questions to which answers were sought and obtained in the

359 cities were: "How much training do your teachers have?" and "How well do you pay your school employees?"

One-half of the men elementary teachers in all cities reporting, it was shown, have had less than the median of 8.10 years of experience. One-fourth have had less than 3.71 years' experience. Of 68,291 teachers 3,493 have had only one year's experience, and of this number 758 are men and women high-school teachers and 2,735 are men and women elementary-grade teachers. More than 10,000 women and 300 men in the cities surveyed, however, have been teaching twenty years and over.

Emergency teachers lacking proper training for their work are said to compose "an alarmingly large proportion" of those now in the classrooms. It is a commonly accepted standard among city boards of education, the report points out, that the teachers in the elementary schools should be at least graduates of standard normal schools, which means a two-year professional course above graduation from a four-year high school.

"It is very significant to note in this connection," the report says, "that more than one-third of the teachers of American cities have less training than this low standard, and that there are thousands of teachers in the elementary schools of our American cities who have even less preparation than graduation from a four-year high-school course."

Following the section of the report described in this quotation there is a statement regarding teachers' salaries and a discussion of the importance of providing more adequate financial resources for the schools if the work of education is to go on at a high level.

#### RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

The following description of a plan for conducting pupils through the elementary schools at varying rates, according to their different abilities, is quoted from the news letter of the University of Virginia:

Beginning with the session of 1919-20, Superintendent J. P. Neff introduced a modification of the Cambridge Plan of grading into the school system of Staunton, Va. The seven elementary grades were divided into three parallel sections, known as sections A, B, and C, respectively. In section A the course of study is divided into six years of work, and the grades are designated by the numbers from 1 to 6, each followed by the letter A. In section B the course is divided into seven years of work, the numbers from 1 to 7, followed by the letter B, being used to designate the grades. In section C the course covers eight years and the grades are numbered from 1C to 8C. All three sections complete the same course of study and prepare pupils for entrance into high school; they differ from each other only in the amount of work covered each

session. Under this "triple track" arrangement of grades, capable pupils may finish the elementary school in six years, those of average ability may finish in seven years and slow pupils may progress through the grades in eight years. Thus a child may enter the school system at 6 or 7 years of age and complete the elementary course when 12, 13, 14 or 15 years old, without skipping or repeating a grade.

This plan of grading is well adapted to any school system where the number of pupils is large enough to require three teachers for each of the lower grades. Its advantages are numerous. Bright children are given an amount of work commensurate with their ability; they are less likely to fall into habits of idleness and mediocrity through having too little to do; and they are enabled to reduce the number of years required for their education. Slow children are not required to attempt to keep pace with those of greater native ability; they are given a chance to replace the habit of failure with that of success because the amount of work expected of them is within the limit of their powers; and they are less likely to have their enthusiasm lessened by failure and consequent repetition of work.

Children of average ability continue to complete the work of the elementary school in seven years, as under the former system of grading. The work of all teachers is made easier and more effective because of the greater homogeneity of their classes. Discipline is less troublesome because of the lack of idleness due to the better adjustment of work. Instruction is simplified because it is relieved from the burden of having to adapt itself to widely divergent degrees of ability in the same classroom.

It has been known for a number of years that probably one-fourth of the pupils of an average school grade are capable of doing the work of the grade above, and that probably one-fourth should be in the grade below. The percentage of failures has emphasized those in the latter group. But the lack of flexibility in our system of grading has prevented adequate recognition of those in the former. Within any large grade or age group of individuals, there are as many above the average as below, and the amount of divergence of individuals above the average is as great as it is below.

Just as there is probably one feeble-minded child in each hundred, selected at random, so there is also one child whose intelligence is as far above the average as that of the feeble-minded child is below. We have taken account of the backward and the dull in our provision of special classes for them, but we have not provided for the unusually gifted, whose social worth is immeasurably greater. The plan of grading adopted in Staunton does not attempt to meet the needs of the upper or the lower five per cent—the highly gifted or the unusually dull. But it does attempt to take into account such differences in ability among children as will enable some of them to complete in six years a course of study which others cannot complete in less than eight.

The obvious difficulty in administering this plan of grading is in the assignment of pupils to the various sections. The basis of assignment used was

mainly the school records of the pupils. Those with the best records were put into section A; those whose records were poor were put into section C; pupils with average records were assigned to section B. Children entering school for the first time were interviewed, certain uniform questions were asked them as to their relatives, the location of their homes, and their ability to perform simple arithmetical operations, and the assignment was made on the basis of the general impression gained. A summer school was conducted for pupils who needed to do extra work to enter a given class. And it was provided that a pupil obviously misplaced might be shifted from one section to another. This, however, would involve, particularly in the upper grades, a temporary lack of adjustment, since no two grades or sections cover the same subject-matter at the same time.

#### NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL BUDGET

The public press has carried from time to time brief statements about the school budget of New York. The figures are large and the complications difficult to unravel for one who is far from the seat of action. The illuminating statement issued by the Public Education Association has more than local interest. It is as follows:

#### OUR ANNUAL SPECTACLE

We have with us again the annual budgetary "follies," with the mayor and the comptroller in their usual rôles. The spectacle this year, however, is more thrilling than ever before.

The program includes, in addition to several of the features of last year's bill, a special exhibition of fiscal acrobatics which for sheer nerve and assurance excels anything yet witnessed in this metropolis.

There is, of course, the well-known sleight-of-hand act of putting the school building item into the tax levy budget and taking it out again for political effect. And the efforts to save the people from the insidious designs of the villainous school authorities are performed with customary gusto. But the real thrill comes in what appears to be a war dance scene, where, after much side stepping and a series of marvelous "flip-flops," the educational budget like a huge dragon is cut right in two in the middle!

This is what happens:

Under the direction of the city authorities the Board of Education has prepared an annual budget estimate aggregating \$146,322,050.11, which comprises \$91,904,114.93 for current maintenance and operation, \$7,497,607.38 for the redemption of special revenue bonds and tax notes authorized and requested to meet unforeseen additional expenses for 1920, and \$46,920,327.80 for capital outlay for new sites and buildings.

After the public has been sufficiently flabbergasted by this enormous sum, it is suddenly more or less naively "discovered," as was also done last year,

that the latter item for sites and buildings should never have been included in the tax-levy budget at all, but should have been placed in a separate request for corporate stock! This simple device first serves to swell the total request of the Department of Education in the tax-levy budget and, then, after the desired effect has been produced on the public, offers a splendid opportunity for dramatic denunciation of the school budget and for heroic city officials to "serve the people" by removing this sum unceremoniously.

The scene is then shifted and action is concentrated on the item of \$91,904,114.93 for current maintenance and operation. Of this amount the state contributes \$9,877,652.16, leaving \$82,026,462.77 for the city to appropriate. This is the real educational budget estimate for 1921.

Immediately the action becomes violent!

It is pointed out vociferously that this request is in excess of this year's allowance to the extent of \$23,534,292.08, and that this is due primarily to the mandatory increase in teachers' salaries, caused by the nefarious Lockwood-Donohue Bill, which was passed over the dead bodies of the mayor and the comptroller.

Think of it! Over \$62,000,000 for the salaries of the professional staff in the budget for 1921, as compared with less than \$40,000,000 in the original allowance for 1920! And all due to mandatory legislation passed, it is true, under the pressure of overwhelming public opinion, but without the approval of the mayor and the comptroller! Surely something must be done to correct and combat such an inexcusable blunder and injustice in a more or less perfect democracy!

It is here again that art, or rather artifice, is employed to triumph over the city's foes.

Since the state, through its Legislature, wilfully placed this "burden" on the city of New York, why shouldn't the state through its own tax levy obtain the necessary funds? This would not only be treating the state in the way it always deserves but also enable the city fathers to use local funds for other purposes and thereby escape the political backfire of an unpopular high tax rate.

Accordingly, the old mandatory provision of 4.9 mills of the tax-rate for school purposes is trotted out to the footlights, despite the fact that it has been made obsolete by the more recent and equally mandatory Lockwood-Donohue Bill, inasmuch as it does not furnish enough to pay even the salaries of teachers. It is thereupon brazenly proposed that the city grant the schools next year only the product derived from this rate, amounting to some \$43,720,880.83, and that it be put up to the Legislature to provide the remaining \$38,305,581.94 necessary to meet the total request of \$82,026,462.77.

What a thrilling suggestion and how pregnant with possibilities for the city school system!

It would really make no difference to the people, of course, since they would pay the taxes anyway, whether levied by the city or the state. But the city



tax-rate would look much lower, the people would think they were getting something for nothing, and the local politicians would live happily forever after!

Nevertheless there is an element of good in all things apparently evil, for, while at first glance this grotesque proposition would seem to threaten the integrity of the schools and leave their operation after July 1 next to the mercy of the Legislature, it may well be that the city authorities have unwittingly performed a signal service to the cause of public education. Thoughtful students of public school administration have long stood for education as a state function and have sought in many ways to concentrate ultimate control of the system in the state department of education. In this they have always been combatted by the city authorities. It is therefore a source of great satisfaction to have our own city officials, however unwittingly, offer such a proposition on their own initiative. For if the state is to be requested to relieve the city to such an extent financially, it is inconceivable that it should not be expected also to relieve the city equally of control and direction of the school system. The city authorities could, therefore, have suggested nothing more welcome than that the present financial death grip of the municipal government on the school system be broken. It may well be interpreted as an important step forward toward the financial independence of the city board of education as the local subdivision of the state department of education.

There is every reason to believe, however, that the city authorities will not pursue this course to its logical conclusion. The "show" is not yet over.

We have yet to see the ensemble before the curtain falls on the last day of this month. The "follies" will doubtless pursue their joyous way to the very end, and we can reasonably expect to see an early change of scene. A loop-hole has already been artfully suggested in the veiled promise to give the schools a "second helping" after all the other city departments have been taken care of. We shall not be surprised, therefore, to see the schools get substantially their total requests in the final appropriations.

#### SUBSIDIES FOR TEACHERS IN TRAINING

From a number of sources one hears the suggestion that states should subsidize students in normal schools as the most effective means of recruiting the teaching profession. The proposal in the concrete, as it is to be presented, for example, at the November meeting of the Missouri State Teachers' Association, is that the state pay to each normal student \$100, taking in return a note of indebtedness from the student. If the student teaches in a public school in Missouri sixteen months within a period of six years, the note is to be canceled; if the obligation to teach is not fulfilled, the note is to be collected. Similar plans are being advocated or at least discussed in other states.

A part of the argument for some such plan can be very forcibly stated in terms of the obligations of the state to its own institutions, the normal schools. It is literally true in most states that the normal school, after being set up and equipped at large expense, is given no support in its canvass for students. A well-organized state normal school finds itself in competition with all kinds of private and public institutions which attract students. The fact that the state needs teachers and is prepared to train them does not bring students and, especially in recent years, the normal schools find themselves suffering seriously in the competition.

It is the belief of the present writer that the situation needs attention, but that the plan of a subsidy for young people who are in training is not the right solution of the problem. Let us suppose for a moment that the plan of a subsidy is adopted. Its immediate effect would undoubtedly be to increase very greatly the number of people preparing to teach. In a very short time there would be coming from the normal schools a stream of people obligated to teach in the schools of the state for two years. Communities would feel that these people had been already very well treated and would hold to a salary scale reduced to make up for the subsidy, which they would be likely to magnify, as a substantial payment in advance.

The better plan is to get a law passed in every state forbidding communities to employ any person to teach school who does not have a normal-school training. This law would operate to fill the normal schools and would also operate to increase salaries. It would leave the individual to meet his own expenses while he is a student, but it would assure him reasonable compensation for expert services if he is successful in completing his training.

There is strong support for the argument here presented in the experience of European nations. England has long been slack in requirements for appointment to teaching positions, but has been generous in subsidies to persons preparing to enter the profession. England has long suffered from an undersupply of trained teachers and has at times been, like ourselves, unable to get teachers for many of the schools of the less-favored districts. Germany, on the other hand, has not subsidized students, but has made the

position of teacher attractive, with the result that there were more candidates than places to be filled up to the beginning of the war.

One might cite also the experience of American schools of theology as by no means encouraging for the subsidy plan. Our divinity students are given scholarships and other exemptions in lavish amounts. One divinity school is reported to have more funds for student scholarships than for professors' salaries. Has the result been a large recruiting of the clergy?

#### MUSEUMS

The Department of Education of the city of New York has published a pamphlet entitled *Free Nature Education by the American Museum of Natural History*. This pamphlet gives an account of the ways in which the museum has provided material for the schools throughout New York City and has also prepared instructive material which can be examined by anyone who visits the museum. The text also emphasizes the very great importance of presenting to people, as incidental materials of instruction, the results of scientific investigations of natural phenomena. A great many people are interested in natural facts, if these can be presented in intelligible form and in a form which can be readily assimilated by one who has only meager educational advantages.

European cities have long recognized the importance of museums and have utilized them as devices for public education. There is not an industrial city in Europe which is not supplied with an industrial museum, giving to the common people an opportunity to become acquainted, through direct observation, with the mechanical devices that are employed in all sorts of manufacturing and transportation processes. In like fashion, museums of natural history and museums of fine art are regarded as necessary equipments of any municipality.

This country has been very slow to see the practical importance of education of this kind. The schools also have only recently recognized the fact that equipment other than textbooks is necessary if children are to be made acquainted with the world about them.

This pamphlet on *Free Nature Education* makes a very emphatic case for general education through museum material, both in the schools and for the common people. It can be read with advantage by citizens and school officers in all parts of the United States. To be sure, many communities do not have the advantages of a collection of materials which can be readily used for these purposes, and no city other than New York is supplied with the rich collection to be found in the American Museum, but the spirit that controls the activities of the American Museum can express itself in a similar way in any municipality which sees the importance of this type of training for its people.

#### A CORRECTION

Mr. F. Dean McClusky, author of articles in the September and October issues of the *Elementary School Journal*, asks that the following statement be published:

Mr. I. L. Kandel, to whom reference was made on page 34 of the September issue of the *Elementary School Journal*, objects to the statement which is incorrectly made in my article that he "repeats Monroe's statements." Mr. Kandel writes to me as follows:

"I have just read the first instalment of your article in the *Elementary School Journal* for September. I only wish here to ask whether a statement that an article written in May repeats articles written in June and September is an example of the non-traditional type of cultivating history."

Mr. Kandel is quite right in recording objection to being put second in this matter, and I hope you will be willing to see that my mistake is corrected.